

1.1 Background of Persons with disability in Lebanon

The Convention on the Right of Persons with Disability (CRPD, UN 2006) defines disability as including: *“Those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”*. The convention marks a “paradigm shift” by utilizing a “social model” of disability. This model sees disability as an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The Lebanese definition of a person with disability is as follows: *“One person who has partial or complete inability to perform one or more of the major activities in daily life, the inability to provide for her/himself, the inability to participate in social activities equally with others or the inability to ensure a normal person and social life according to the prevailing social norms due to visual impairment, hearing impairment, motor disability or mental disorder , partial or complete, permanent or temporary, innate or acquired”*.

There are no clear figures on the exact number of people with disability among the Lebanese population. The rate ranges between 2% of the population as per the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), and 10% as provided by United Nations Organizations, out of which 84% suffer from one disability.

In terms of geographical distribution, the governorate of Mount Lebanon holds the highest percentage of persons with disability in Lebanon (38.8%), followed by the South, Bekaa, North, Beirut and Nabatieh. However, these figures could not be accurate since there are high numbers of disability centers in Mount Lebanon, and many persons with disabilities are not registered for different reasons.

Individuals with disabilities suffer from a lack of accessibility to public infrastructure/amenities, as well as, inequalities at different social, legal, services, economic and coordination levels. This trend is emphasized in regions when compared to Beirut and Mount Lebanon. Moreover, poverty rate among the persons with disability is three times the national rate.

The status of the persons with disability in Lebanon is a serious problem that needs to be addressed at several levels:

- Legal dimension to provide the framework enabling disabled people to be treated equally.
- Social dimension in order to tackle the causes of marginalization of people within the society, and work on their inclusion in all aspects of society.
- Accessibility dimension closely linked to the legal aspect in order to ensure the access to buildings for all types of disabilities.

A general vision aiming at lessening the obstacles that face persons with special needs, leading to a barrier-free environment is the challenge.